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R 191606Z JAN 84

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SUBJ

<> TAKE 1 OF 2 -- <><>KRASNAYA ZVEZDA<><> ON LIFE AT THE SALANG TUNNEL  
PM191606

<> MOSCOW <><>KRASNAYA ZVEZDA<><> IN RUSSIAN 14 JAN 84 SECOND EDITION P 3  
((LIEUTENANT COLONEL ENGINEER V. SUKHODOLSKIY DISPATCH UNDER THE  
"AFGHAN NOTEBOOK" RUBRIC: "SALANG"))

((TEXT)) OH, SALANG, MY SALANG...WHENEVER I CLOSE MY  
EYES I SEE AGAIN THE CONVOYS OF AFGHAN TRUCKS: THE SILVER TANKERS,  
THE ("BURUBUKHAYKI") DECORATED LIKE NEW YEAR'S TREES, AND THE KAMA  
TRUCKS TRANSPORTING SNOW-WHITE SACKS OF CARBAMIDE...I AM ABLE TO  
MAKE OUT IN THE BLACKNESS OF THE NIGHT MY TRAVELING COMPANION,  
OFFICER VASILIIY MENSHIKOV, WHO IS WALKING AHEAD IN THE LIGHT OF  
THE HEADLAMPS AND KNOCKING ON THE CABS OF VEHICLES WHICH  
HAVE STOPPED FOR THE NIGHT UNDER A COVERED GALLERY, BLOCKING THE  
PAVEMENT. HE KNOCKS AND ASKS FOR THE TRUCKS TO BE MOVED ASIDE.  
THE GHOSTLY FIGURES OF DRIVERS IN ORIENTAL CLOTHES FLICKER  
THROUGH THE NIGHT, AND ENGINES ROAR. THEY MAKE ROOM FOR US AND WE  
ADVANCE SLOWLY UNTIL WE ARE CLEAR. WE REACH THE "SOUTH" CONTROL  
POINT. AND THEN IT IS NIGHTTIME AND WE ARE SPEEDING THROUGH THE  
QUITE EMPTY TUNNEL, CLIMBING ALL THE TIME. A GREEN LIGHT  
FLASHES BY -- THE HIGHEST POINT, 3,363 METERS -- AND THE ROAD BEGINS  
TO DESCEND, THE ELECTRIC LIGHTS SEEMING TO MERGE INTO A SINGLE  
BLURRED LINE...THE TUNNEL COMES TO AN END AND WE STOP AT THE  
"NORTH" CONTROL POINT.

THROUGH THE RAYS OF THE SETTING SUN I SEE THE MIGHTY, SNOW-DECKED  
MOUNTAIN WITH THE GAPING HOLE OF THE TUNNEL AND THE HALF-BLOCKED  
OLD ROAD WHICH WE SLOWLY SNAKED UP. AND THERE AT THE SUMMIT I  
DISTINCTLY HEAR THE MEASURED BREATHING OF THIS MIGHTY BLOCK OF  
STONE THROUGH WHICH MAN HAS BORED A PASSAGE. IT IS  
SAID TO BE THE HIGHEST TUNNEL IN THE WORLD...

THE SALANG OBELISK, A RED STAR WITH RADIALS MADE FROM TIN-PLATE

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-- THE MOTOR TRANSPORT TROOPS' EMBLEM -- STAYS IN MY MEMORY. AN OBELISK TO HONOR BOTH OUR AND AFGHAN DRIVERS... I SEE THE BLACK CLIFF AT THE APPROACH TO THE TUNNEL AND HEAR MY COMPANION'S WORDS: THE BANDITS FOR SOME REASON OR OTHER MOSTLY ATTACK THE COLUMNS BY THE BLACK CLIFF. FOUR DAYS EARLIER HIS ARMORED CARRIER HAD BEEN FIRED ON THERE, NOT FAR FROM THE WATERMILL. HOWEVER, THEY HAD BEEN POOR SHOTS. A DENT COULD BE SEEN IN THE ASPHALT. THEY HAD OPENED UP WITH A HEAVY-CALIBER MACHINEGUN. TO THE RIGHT, THERE WERE THE SKELETONS OF VEHICLES, A HEAP OF SCORCHED, RUSTING METAL, SCATTERED ALONG THE RIVER, THE BEAUTIFUL MOUNTAIN RIVER WHICH IS ALSO CALLED THE SALANG. THEY WERE THE SIGNS OF A RECENT BANDIT ATTACK ON A PEACEFUL AFGHAN COLUMN. THE ROUTE IS AMAZINGLY BEAUTIFUL. I RECALL THE WORDS OF THE GENERAL WHO SAW ME OFF AS I WAS LEAVING FOR SALANG, WHO HAD BEEN THERE SEVERAL TIMES: "DO YOU KNOW WHAT I DREAM OF? I DREAM OF SETTING OFF FOR AFGHANISTAN ON A TOURIST PASS IN YEARS TO COME WITH MY GRANDCHILDREN, WHEN I AM ALREADY OLD AND GRAY. AND I WILL CHOOSE THIS ROUTE SO AS TO TAKE THEM THROUGH SALANG. SO AS TO SEE THE BRIGHT SUN AND THE YELLOW FOLIAGE AND TO STOP AT EVERY INN AND DRINK THE COOL WATER AND TASTE ITS SWEETNESS...AND ALSO TO BRING FLOWERS TO THE OBELISKS IN THE MOUNTAINS." THAT TIME WILL COME | THE AFGHAN PEOPLE WILL DRIVE OUT THE LAST BANDIT. TOURISTS WILL VISIT THE COUNTRY. AND THEY WILL HAVE MUCH TO SEE, FOR THE COUNTRY IS STUNNINGLY BEAUTIFUL. AND THE ROAD TO SALANG IS ALL BUT THE BRIGHTEST PEARL IN THE HIGHLY COLORED AFGHAN NECKLACE.

ALONGSIDE ME IN THE PERSONNEL CARRIER WAS SENIOR LIEUTENANT ABDUL (VAKIL). HE WAS A POLITICAL WORKER, A GRADUATE OF THE SARANDOI ((MILITIA)) ACADEMY. IN JALALABAD THE COUNTERREVOLUTIONARIES HAD BURNED DOWN HIS PARENTS' HOME AND MURDERED HIS BROTHER AND THREE OF HIS BROTHER'S CHILDREN. HE HAD ALREADY BEEN THERE IN SALANG FOR 7 YEARS WITH HIS COMPANY AND WOULD BE REMAINING THERE UNTIL THE REVOLUTION ACHIEVED FINAL VICTORY. HE TOLD ME THIS AS HE PEERED INTENTLY BEYOND THE BRIDGE THAT HAD APPEARED... SO WHAT DOES SALANG MEAN? IN A COUNTRY, WHERE THERE ARE NO RAILROADS, WHERE TRUCK AND CAMEL TRANSPORT EVERYTHING FROM A SEWING NEEDLE TO MODERN MACHINES, WHERE THE CAPITAL IS CONNECTED TO OUR COUNTRY BY THE SINGLE HIGHWAY BETWEEN KABUL AND TERMEZ, THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS ROAD IS MORE THAN JUST GREAT, THE ROAD MEANS LIFE FOR THE REPUBLIC. WE STARTED ON THE HINDUKUSH ROAD. IT HAD BEEN DECIDED TO TUNNEL THROUGH THE MOUNTAIN AT THE HIGHEST POINT OF THIS ROAD: THEY HAD DUG, HEWED, AND BURROWED THEIR WAY THROUGH IT, AND THIS TUNNEL, WHICH HAS SAVED THE COUNTRY MILLIONS OF AFGHANIS, CAME INTO EXISTENCE. IT WAS BUILT BY THE SOVIET UNION. THE CONSTRUCTION PROJECT WAS IMMENSE, A REAL FRIENDSHIP PROJECT. THE RESULT OF THE WORK WAS A TUNNEL 2.7 KM LONG AND ABOUT 2 KM OF COVERED GALLERY.

ABDUL (VAKIL) RECOUNTED THE UNFORTUNATE EVENTS OF A YEAR EARLIER. THE ENGINE OF A TRUCK HAD SUDDENLY CUT OUT IN THE TUNNEL. THE COLUMN STOPPED. NOBODY SWITCHED OFF THEIR ENGINES AND THE EXHAUST FUMES BUILT UP VERY, VERY QUICKLY. THE VENTILATORS HAD BEEN UNABLE TO COPE: TOO MANY TRUCKS HAD ALREADY ENTERED THE

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TUNNEL. MANY DRIVERS LOST CONSCIOUSNESS AND SOME DIED FROM ASPHYXIATION BEFORE THE HIGHWAY WORKERS REACHED THEM AND THE WAY WAS CLARERED. FOLLOWING THIS, THE AFGHANS MADE A REQUEST FOR SOVIET MOTOR TRANSPORT TROOPS TO ASSIST IN STRAIGHTENING THINGS OUT. LT COL ROMANOV, A COMMUNIST, ARRIVED IN SALANG WITH HIS SUBUNIT A YEAR AGO. "DO MEET HIM," WAS THE ADVICE I HEARD IN KABUL. "HE AND AFGHAN COLONEL (DZHAMALUDDIN) ARE THE TWO PEOPLE THANKS TO WHOM THE SALANG TUNNEL IS NOW WORKING LIKE CLOCKWORK. SMOOTH AND RELIABLE CLOCKWORK."

I DID NOT EVEN HAVE TO GO LOOKING FOR HIM. ROMANOV HIMSELF, A DARK, LONG-NOSED MAN WITH A DARK MOUSTACHE, WEARING A BLACK FUR JACKET, WAIST-BELT, AND FUR CAP, JUMPED FROM A TRAILER AT THE "NORTH" CONTROL POINT. WE INTRODUCED OURSELVES, BUT IN A TRICE HE WAS SPEEDING TOWARD THE "SOUTH" CONTROL POINT IN HIS GAZ TRUCK. AND IT WAS EVENING BEFORE WE GOT INTO CONVERSATION. THE FACT IS THAT AFGHAN COLUMNS STILL TRAVEL ONLY DURING THE DAY. THEY SPEND THE NIGHTS IN POPULATION CENTERS. FEARING BANDIT ATTACKS BY DUSHMANS. IN THE EVENING THEREFORE THE TUNNEL WAS QUIET, AND IT WAS QUIET TOO IN OUR TRAILER, ONTO WHOSE ROOF THE SOFT, MOIST SNOW WAS FALLING STEADILY AND UNHURRIEDLY. IT HAD ALREADY BEEN SNOWING FOR SOME HOURS, AND WHEN WE GOT OUT AT MIDNIGHT -- ROMANOV WAS EXPECTING ONE OF OUR TANK COLUMNS BACK FROM EXERCISES -- WE DID NOT RECOGNIZE THE PASS. EVERYTHING WAS WHITE. THE TELEPHONE RANG: SNR LT YURIY KOSTACHEV REPORTED FROM THE "SOUTH" CONTROL POINT THAT THE TANKS HAD ENTERED THE TUNNEL. AND AFTER A FEW MINUTES A RUMBLE CAME FROM THE TUNNEL, THE TRAILER TOO BEGAN TO VIBRATE, AND THE TANKS HURRIED PAST, LEAVING THEIR RIBBED TRACK MARKS IN THE FRESH WHITE SNOW.

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2 (FBXX) \*19/01/84\* \*15:15\*

ZCZC 20:13:00Z (FB)

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RTTUZYUW RUDOMKA5662 0191746 MTMS-UUUU--RUEBHAA.

R 191607Z JAN 84

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<> REF PM191606 MOSCOW <><>KRASNAYA ZVEZDA<><> RUSSIAN 14 JAN///FRESH WHITE SNOW.

<> TAKE 2 OF 2 -- <><>KRASNAYA ZVEZDA<><> ON LIFE AT THE SALANG TUNNEL PM191607

((TEXT)) "THERE WILL BE NOONE TILL MORNING NOW,"

ROMANOV TOLD ME, AND WE RETURNED TO THE TRAILER TO TALK AND LISTEN...

ROMANOV, ROMANOV, ONLY YOU KNOW HOW MANY TIMES A DAY YOUR TRUCK DASHES FROM THE "NORTH" TO THE "SOUTH" CONTROL POINT AND HOW MUCH ENERGY AND EFFORT YOU EXPENDED THERE LAST YEAR. YOU ALONE KNOW...

HIS HOME IS ON THE K KOMMUNIZMU KOLKHOZ IN THE VILLAGE OF KALYNIA IN KHMELNITSKIY OBLAST'S KAMENETS-PODOLSKIY RAYON. HIS FATHER, ALEKSANDR ANTONOVICH, WAS A FRONT-LINE SOLDIER WHO FOUGHT AT STALINGRAD AND WHO REACHED PRAGUE AS A COMPANY WARRANT OFFICER. "HE DRINKS A GLASS ON THE ANNIVERSARY AND BEGINS RECOLLECTING STALINGRAD," THE SON TOLD ME, WITH A SMILE ON HIS FACE.

I ASKED HIM ABOUT HIS APPARENTLY NON-UKRAINIAN NAME.

VASILIIY ALEKSANDROVICH EXPLAINED THAT ONE OF THE TSARS TRAVELLING IN THE UKRAINE HAD SPENT THE NIGHT NEAR THEIR VILLAGE, HAD LIKED THE SPOT, AND HAD HAD THE KINDNESS TO GRANT THE PEASANTS THE NAME OF ROMANOV. THAT WAS HOW THE SIDORENKOS, IVANENKOS, PETRENKOS, AND VOZNYUKS BECAME ROMANOV. HE HAS TWO DAUGHTERS, THE ELDER CALLED LENA, THE YOUNGER OKSANA. HE REGRETTED NOT HAVING SEEN OKSANA STARTING HER FIRST YEAR AT SCHOOL...

THE SUBUNIT'S TASK IS TO SECURE THE UNINTERRUPTED MOVEMENT OF MOTOR COLUMNS, ELIMINATE THE CONSEQUENCES OF AVALANCHES OF SNOW AND MUD SLIDES, AND PREVENT SABOTAGE. ROMANOV TOLD ME WITH PRIDE

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HOW THEY WERE FULLY PREPARED FOR THE WINTER. ABOVE ALL IN THEIR EVERYDAY LIFE. THERE WERE DRYING FACILITIES AT EACH CONTROL POINT AND HEATED WASHROOMS, WHICH PREVIOUSLY DID NOT EXIST. CANTEENS, KITCHENS. AND BATHS| THEN THERE WERE WARM CLOTHES: FELT BOOTS, PADDED JACKETS, THICK PANTS, FUR JACKETS, AND GLOVES. THE EQUIPMENT HAD BEEN PREPARED. EVERYTHING REQUIRED HAD BEEN BROUGHT IN, INCLUDING SAND, 1,500 CUBIC METERS OF IT. SAND IS NECESSARY THERE TOO, ICE PATCHES BEING NO RARITY. WE LIVE WELL AND DO NOT COMPLAIN, HE SAID. HOW DID THEY CELEBRATE THE NEW YEAR? WE HAD A NEW YEAR'S TREE IN OUR TRAILER, AND SENIOR LIEUTENANT OLEG BASISTIY WAS GRANDFATHER FRONT. THERE WERE FIR TREES AT EACH CONTROL POINT. I TRAVELED TO THE POSTS ON NEW YEAR'S EVE TO OFFER MY GREETINGS. UNFORTUNATELY, WE DID NOT HAVE ANY TELEVISION SETS. WE LISTENED TO THE RADIO. EACH INDIVIDUAL HAD HIS OWN PARTICULAR THOUGHTS, BUT MOSCOW WAS IN EVERYONE'S MIND...

"MY PEOPLE ARE A REALLY SPLENDID CREW," ROMANOV SAID, AS HE BEGAN TO TALK IN DETAIL ABOUT EACH OF THEM. AND NOW, LEAFING THROUGH MY NOTEBOOK, I AM, AS IT WERE, CARRIED BACK TO THAT NIGHT AT SALANG AND I HEAR ROMANOV'S COLD-AFFECTED VOICE SAYING: "THE SUBUNIT'S WARRANT OFFICER IS SENIOR ENSIGN VLADIMIR TARASOV. HE HAS PLANTED TREES ROUND AND ABOUT THE CULTIVATED FLOWERS. ON ROCKS LIKE THESE... AND WHAT A BATH HOUSE HE HAS, AND A VEGETABLE STOREHOUSE| HE BROUGHT ALL THE SOIL FOR THE FLOWER BEDS DOWN HERE; HE IS WAITING FOR THE SPRING AND IS ALWAYS DREAMING ABOUT HIS FLOWER BEDS. THEN THERE IS KALININSKIY, HE'S FROM THE VOLGA. HE GOT MARRIED THIS FURLOUGH..."

"LT VASILIIY KOVALEV TAKES CARE OF COMMUNICATIONS FOR ME. HE WENT TO SALANG IMMEDIATELY AFTER LEAVING COLLEGE. HE THOUGHT THAT HE WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO COPE, COMMUNICATIONS ARE NO SIMPLE MATTER. BUT HE HAS PROVED HIS WORTH WELL| AT NIGHT, IN A BLIZZARD, OR IN A FROST HE TAKES TWO MEN AND GOES OUT TO RESTORE COMMUNICATIONS. A LIEUTENANT LIKE THAT IS A MARVEL. WE INTEND TO ACCEPT HIM INTO THE PARTY. I MYSELF HAVE WRITTEN HIS RECOMMENDATION."

ROMANOV ALSO DESCRIBED THOSE WHO HAVE ALREADY LEFT SALANG AFTER MAKING A GOOD MARK IN THE SOLDIERS' HEARTS AND, OF COURSE, THOSE WHO ARE STILL HERE NOW IN THESE SNOWY JANUARY DAYS. MAJOR ANATOLIIY ANDRIANOV, SNR LT LUT SOYUSANOV, SNR LT VLADIMIR SAGAYDACHNYY, LT ANATOLIIY BORTKEVICH, LT VLADIMIR SAMYKHIN, AND SENIOR ENSIGN ANATOLIIY BELOV.

ROMANOV NODS TOWARD THE OFFICER RESTING ABOVE -- THE TRAILER HAS BUNK BEDS: "WRITE ABOUT HIM. SNR LT GERASIM GERASIMOVICH MATYUKIN. THERE WAS A HUGE SNOW DRIFT HERE, IT HAD BEEN SNOWING FOR 3 DAYS. THE VEHICLES CAME TO A HALT. THERE WAS A BLIZZARD -- YOU COULD NOT SEE YOUR HAND IN FRONT OF YOUR FACE. HEADED BY HIM OUR SOLDIERS WENT OUT ON FOOT ALONG THE ROAD TO RESCUE THE AFGHAN DRIVERS. THEY GOT THEM ALL AND GAVE THEM SOMETHING TO DRINK AND EAT -- OTHERWISE THEY WOULD HAVE FROZEN|"

THE SALANG TUNNEL. FROM THE VERY FIRST DAYS OF ITS CONSTRUCTION IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN A SYMBOL OF OUR FRIENDSHIP. ROMANOV,

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TOO, HAS MANY FRIENDS THERE. COL (DZHAMALUDDIN), CAPTAIN (AKO) MOHAMMAD, AND SNR LT 'ABDOL (VAKIL) VENTILATOR OPERATOR (AZIZ) IN AN INDUSTRIOUS, RELIABLE MAN. HE SOMETIMES WALKS AROUND IN A BRAND NEW SOVIET OFFICERS' FIELD TUNIC. WITH A SMILE HE SAYS: "ROMANOV GAVE THIS TO (AZIZ)."

WHEN I LEFT THE SITUATION AT SALANG WAS WORRYING. NEWS HAD COME IN THAT BANDITS WERE PREPARING TO SABOTAGE THE TUNNEL. THEIR TRUCKS CARRYING EXPLOSIVES AND MINES WERE APPROACHING IN A COLUMN. SAPPERS WITH DOGS WERE CALLED OUT. SURVEILLANCE WAS STEPPED UP. THE TRUCKS DID NOT REACH THE PASS...

OH, SALANG, MY SALANG... LANDSLIDES SWEEP AWAY YOUR BRIDGES, AVALANCHES FALL FROM YOUR MOUNTAIN PEAKS. BLIZZARDS FILL YOUR TUNNELS WITH SNOW. BANDITS' BULLETS RIDDLE CIVILIAN VEHICLES. BUT SALANG LIVES ON AND WORKS -- LIKE CLOCKWORK.

(ENDALL) 14 JAN JP/BENNETT/NE 19/1807Z JAN

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